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STC TRAINING BULLETIN

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Staph/MRSA Infections in Inmates and Staff

A number of incidents have been reported in recent months in which inmates have complained of badly infected spider bites.

Actually, spiders have nothing to do with these incidents. Instead, the culprit is a bacterial infection called Staph or MRSA, which is common in crowded places such as jails, hospitals or nursing homes.



Because of the potential for easy transmission of Staph/MRSA, it is vital that staff take precautions both to protect themselves from infection and to prevent the spread of infection among the inmate population.

skin contact with an infected person or by contact with objects that have been used or touched by an infected person. Because the bacteria can survive on an object for over 24 hours, transmission most often occurs when towels, razors, clothing, or gym equipment is shared without being properly cleaned. Additionally, the pus that often drains from Staph infections is very infectious.

A Staph Infection can occur when the bacteria enters the body through a cut or other injury. Symptoms of a Staph/MRSA Infection include:

- A rash, pimples, boils, or blisters.
- Redness, tenderness, warmth, and/or swelling of the skin.
- Pus and/or open wounds.

What is a Staph/MRSA Infection?

Staphylococcus aureus, or Staph, is a common bacterial skin infection that is often misdiagnosed as a spider bite. *Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a strain of Staph that is resistant to Methicillin, the antibiotic most commonly used to treat Staph infections. Staph bacteria are transmitted by skin-to-



If left untreated, the infection can become serious.

In extreme cases where the infection reaches the heart or lungs, the infection can be life threatening.

How do I prevent becoming infected?

Generally, infection is best avoided through common sense and good hygiene. This includes:

- Wear gloves during contact with inmates or their belongings.
- Avoid contact with other people's open wounds.
- If you have a scratch or other open wound, keep it covered with a sterile bandage.
- Seek immediate, non-emergency medical care for any suspected infection.
- Wash your hands with water and antibacterial soap frequently (after contact with inmates, after removing gloves, and especially before eating and before you go home.)



- Discouraging inmates from sharing razors, towels, clothing, and other such belongings.
- Discouraging inmates from popping their or other inmates' boils, pimples, or blisters.
- Immediately referring any inmate with a suspected Staph/MRSA infection to the Medical Staff.

How is A Staph Infection Treated?

As previously mentioned, Methicillin is the drug of choice for this particular bug. However, since MRSA is

resistant to Methicillin, an alternative antibiotic must be used.

The antibiotic may be a pill, or in serious cases, by IV.

Generally, prompt treatment can prevent the infection from becoming serious.



Contact with someone who has a Staph or MRSA infection does not automatically mean you will be infected. However, you should wash thoroughly and seek medical treatment. Additionally, notify your supervisor and complete any required documentation.

Additionally, by preventing spread of Staph among inmates, officers can reduce the likelihood of staff becoming infected. This can be accomplished by:



Because Staph and MRSA infections are usually brought into the jail by new arrestees, it is not possible to completely eliminate it from our workplace. Only constant vigilance and caution on the part of staff can prevent the spread of Staph/MRSA among

inmates, staff, and our families.

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